

City of Alexandria, Virginia
Park and Recreation Commission

REGULAR MEETING
Thursday, October 20, 2011, 7:00 p.m.
T.C. Williams High School
3330 King Street- Alexandria, Virginia
Rotunda, Room 205

Summary Minutes

Commission Members: Chairperson, Judy Guse-Noritake, Gina Baum, Richard Brune, William Cromley, Ripley Forbes, Robert Moir, Jeffrey Murphy, Caleb Vogt. Absent: Clark Mercer, John Sullivan, and Mollie Timmons.

RPCA Staff: Director James Spengler, William Chesley, Deputy Director Recreation Services, Jack Browand, Acting Deputy Director Park Operations, Cheryl Lawrence, Acting Director Special Events/Marina, Ron Kagawa, Division Chief Park Planning and Capital Projects, Dana Wedeles, Park Planner, Laura Durham, Open Space Planner, David Ghezzi, Architect and Robin DeShields, Executive Assistant. Absent: Alisa Carrel, Director Office on the Arts.

Guests: none.

- I. Call to Order by Chair: The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. The Chair welcomed Caleb Vogt, new high school member, and senior at T.C. Williams H.S. to the meeting.
- II. Approval of Summary Minutes from September 15, 2011: Richard Brune motioned to approve the minutes, Robert Moir seconded motion, the minutes were approved.
- III. **DIVISION UPDATES:** See Staff Reports - to view full Staff Reports go to www.alexandriava.gov/Recreation/Commission reports.
 - A. **Recreation Programs and Service Update** - William Chesley - See Staff Report:
 - **Safe Place Initiative** – The Department of RPCA has been designated a new Safe Place site for children. Staff is promoting the program throughout the community. Recreation Centers are designated Safe Place sites as well as Fire Stations since both operate seven days a week.
 - **Miracle Field** - Jack Taylor, Alexandria Toyota donated \$10,000 to the Miracle League of Alexandria in a ceremony prior to the Miracle League game on October 15. Dana Wedeles said another \$10,000 was received on behalf of Toyota USA. Funds will help build a miracle field at the City's Lee Center. Project funds donated to date total \$60,000. The project goal is \$130,000. The Chair P&RC will write a thank you letter to Mr. Taylor.
 - RPCA and ACPS collaborated to create the Titans Lounge at T.C. Williams. This program is for students that want to stay after school but are not in extracurricular activities. The program meets in the cafeteria and daily attendance is approximately 100 students.
 - **Warwick Pool Incident Progress Report** -See Attached Report. Mr. Chesley said that staff has completed a thorough review of the procedures that were in place at the time of the near drowning incident. Based on the review, several recommendations will move forward for implementation to enhance pool safety.

B. **Park Operations Report** - Jack Browand – See Staff Report.

- **Friends of Dora Kelly Park Sponsor Annual Fall Cleanup**, Saturday, October 22, rain date is Sunday, October 23. The Chair requested that a meeting be set-up with the “Friends of Dora Kelly Park” before the Beauregard Corridor Plan proceeds much further, to discuss the impact the proposed field, may have on existing tree canopy. Staff plans to present an update at the November P&RC meeting.
- **Other-Tree Reports**: Mr. Browand reported that tree related issues are now fully reportable using the City’s new CRM system. The CRM system allows for the inputting of comments codes, and uploading of photos.

C. **Office of the Arts Update** – report by Alisa Carrel- See Staff Report.

- Mr. Spengler highlighted the upcoming Alexandria Film Festival, November 3- 6, and some of the feature films that will be shown. The event will kick-off with a donor reception on November 2, at the Morrison House. The Film Festival will take place at various Alexandria locations. The events details are at: www.AlexandriaFilm.org.
- **Update on the purchase of a stage for the “Duron” site**. Staff was anticipating doing it in-house; however, the cost was too much. Staff will revisit using a contractor for project. Funding is available - \$20K has been set aside, plus \$5,000 from an Arts grant.
- The Living Landscape Fund received an anonymous donation of \$10K for the Four Mile Run Park expansion improvements.

D. **Park Planning Updates** - Ron Kagawa, Laura Durham, Dana Wedeles.

i. **Division Updates- See Staff Report –Activities Updates**.

- **Hammond Upper Field Lighting Update**:
- **Discussion**: The Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) held a hearing on October 13. The BZA reviewed a technical issue regarding the authority of the Planning Commission to approve the lighting. Several staff, the Chair, and members attended, including Bill Rivers, Secretary YSAB. The Chair said it was a win for Hammond lights and the City’s Planning and Zoning (P&Z) Department.
- **Kagawa** - the BZA denied the first two challenges on appeal, regarding the process, and the determination of the Planning Director regarding setback requirements. The third item, regarding the impact of the lights on the adjacent residential community is still pending. The BZA will approve their findings in November and then the item will go to City Council in December. The Seminary Hills Association may appeal the BZA decision before the Alexandria Circuit Court. A Circuit Court appeal would still not bar the lights even upon appeal, the project can still go to City Council, if approved, the project can go immediately for bid and construction. There has been a series of discussions with Planning, and the City Attorney to understand the process.
- **Chair**- one person testified at the BZA hearing concerning home values. **Kagawa**-said impact of lights is not just about light levels, but a belief that placing lights adjacent to residences, devalues homes. Chair commented - a Planning Commission member said that there is no action taken in the City that has a zero effect on residents. The Chair asked staff to keep her informed of when this case proceeds to City Council.
- **Witter Field Update**: See Staff Report. Mr. Kagawa said that the project is slightly behind schedule due to rain. Rectangular fields - anticipated completion - Spring 2012. Diamond field and remainder of site - anticipated for completion is Fall of 2012.

ii. **CIP/CFMP Process:** See Staff Reports:

CIP Update: Dana Wedeles, Park Planner, gave a brief slide presentation on the new **Park CIP Framework**. See Staff Report and Handout.

Wedeles: The goal is to establish a list of priorities based on three items: the 2011 Needs Assessment, Park Standards, and a park inventory conducted over the summer. Three interns documented and photographed all amenities within the parks. All information is now in the City's GIS system. Staff can use the GIS system to view the conditions of each park. A full photo database is also available for every park. Staff developed a draft set of standards over the summer. Also developed was a new centralized database to document all parks properties and capital projects. The database will generate monthly reports, project budget information, and project updates. Within the database, there are tabs to tag projects as either long-term or short-term. This will help to prioritize the CIP list. See Summary of Park CIP. In response to a question from the Chair, Ms. Wedeles said that staff hopes to meet with the City's GIS staff prior to end of year, to review and develop a public version of the report. Currently report is for internal use.

Capital Facilities Maintenance Projects (CFMP) process for Recreation Centers and facilities projects - Ron Kagawa. Kagawa said that David Ghezzi, Architect was responsible for completing this project. Ghezzi presented the report - New system will provide RPCA staff the ability to identify, track, determine funding, and schedule facility maintenance. System also allows coordination with General Services (G.S) to help prioritize projects. Health and safety issues are a priority. Memorandum dated October 5, to Recreation Centers and Facilities Center Directors, outlines the processes and procedures for identifying, procuring, and executing CFMP projects, See Steps 1-10. While work is in process, it will be important to ensure customers understand that they may experience inconvenience. There will be a Project Closeout process with G.S. and Center Directors. The Closeout process will include ensuring all projects have warranties. Park Planning will work with Center Directors, and G.S. staff to ensure follow-up on warranties. New CFMP process will provide RPCA and G.S. with a better guide for the future. General Service will conduct a facility analysis of all City Recreation Centers. Kagawa - once data is collected, the database will track information along with G.S., e.g., if ballast fails frequently, staff will switch to another more reliable part in the future. Staff will use data to look at trends to help make improvements.

The Chair asked if this new system will help track needed replacements of artificial turf on fields. Kagawa- said yes.

Bob Moir asked a question about the cycle for replacing rubberized pellets on artificial turf fields, and if the City had line-painting equipment. Kagawa responded that RPCA replaces the rubberized pellets periodically. Additionally, the City has a line painter for painting /restripping fields. Cromley commented that while pre-marked fields are beautiful, lines can sometimes be confusing.

iii. **External Citizen CIP Requests for Review -Fall 2011-** Laura Durham, Open Space Coordinator. See Staff Report.

- The Park and Recreation Commission, and RPCA staff held a lengthy discussion about the new process for reviewing external CIP project requests.

- Durham- clarified that not all submissions would actually be CIP Projects and some are already in out years of the CIP. The P&RC review method will help filter requests. An information/memo was on the Commission March 2011 agenda (Copy attached). The memo details two P&RC review cycles, one in November, and another in June. For the first cycle, November 2011, RPCA received eight (8) requests shown by Park District. Five are from the Waterfront District (submitted by the Waterfront Committee). The remaining three requests are for: Mt. Jefferson Greenway Area, Simpson Field- Batting Shell Fencing, and Ben Brenman Park community garden.
- The Department of RPCA will seek recommendations from the P&RC in November. Some requests may involve an additional public and /or City review process (i.e., SUP's and public comment).
- Commissioner Forbes- expressed concern about the process of reviewing these requests from the public without having a public process or hearing. He stated that the process should be open and transparent.
- Durham- said there are several steps. This is not for this years' CIP. A number of items will require greater public involvement.
- Kagawa- reminded the Commission that the process was bought before the Commission in March, and is identified on RPCA's website -Memo identifies the process for review by the P&RC to help guide in decision making.
- James Spengler Director RPCA- said that items that make it into RPCA's requested CIP Program would still require a formal City Council public hearing as part of the City's budget process. If the Commission is not involved with the CIP process, then all decisions are up to staff and City Council. Having the P&RC review items will allow an opportunity and time to see if an item has merit, and get required documentation into the City's process.
- All new FY 2013 requests are due into OMB by this Friday, October 21. RPCA receives requests every month for items such as, playgrounds renovations, park lights, etc. The question is which requests should move forward. The Commission has an opportunity to be involved.
- Action: The Chair suggested moving forward with discussing CIP requests at the November meeting. This meeting will not be a public hearing but an opportunity for the Commission to evaluation projects and provide input.

- iv. **Armistead Boothe Park Concept Plan:** - See Staff Report and Concept Plan. Mr. Kagawa provided information and answered questions about the Boothe Park Playground Renovation and related site improvements. The playground is in the approved FY 2012 CIP for renovation. The Commission determined it was not necessary to have a public hearing. Typically, replacements/renovations do not qualify for a hearing. Given the proposed site modifications outreach to various community groups is important.

- E. **Marketing, Special Events, Waterfront/Marina** – Cheryl Lawrence. See Staff Report for details & list of upcoming special events. Ms. Lawrence reviewed the report and highlighted some upcoming special events. Marina - A marina users meeting is scheduled for November 3, at City Hall. This is an opportunity for the

Waterfront Committee to speak with marina users. Commissioner Baum will attend on behalf of the P&RC.

IV. Director's Report - James Spengler (verbal updates):

A. FY2013 Budget- See Attachment: FY2013 Summary for Budget Adjustments Submission:

- The City Council budget process occurs between November 2011 and May 2012. The Department of RPCA has submitted budget adjustments requests, primarily for operating funds for capital facilities coming on-line. The requests total \$493,379. The City's revenue stream forecast is to remain flat for the next two fiscal years. Council will not raise the tax rate for now. There is a \$14 million dollar budget shortfall. The Director reviewed the list of projects with the Commission (See Handout).

B. Jones Point Park Update- See Staff Report. There were no questions/comments project is moving forward. Also, see JPP Community Liaison Group Meeting Minutes.

Additional Discussion:

- **Hillside Park Litter**- a resident living adjacent to the park has written the City over the past two years, about illegal activity occurring within the park. He said the City should take steps to make the park safer. Warwick Village homeowners are concerned. The latest request is for security lighting in the park. The Director RPCA asked staff to submit a CIP request for security lights at Hillside Park, for approval by Council.
- **Potomac Yards (P.Y) Landbay D:**
CMO asked Director Spengler to coordinate all City Departments for this project. There is an upcoming meeting in Old Town Greens.
- **Work Session on Aquatics Master Plan and Needs Assessment -**
The Chair reported that at the request of Acting City Manager, Bruce Johnson, the work session on the Aquatics Master Plan, and the Needs Assessment originally scheduled for November is cancelled. Staff will work to rescheduled in 2012. The Open Space Summit is also deferred with a goal to begin this project in January/February and target to complete in June.
Laura Durham will follow-up and reschedule the Consultants' visit.

V. Discussion on "Friends Groups" - Laura Durham.

Ms. Durham- gave an update on Friends Groups-See Staff Report and memos dated 10/20/11. RPCA Park Planning has been reviewing and assessing existing public/private programs and agreements that support improvements in and to the City's park system. The report outlines the various partnerships both private and public for groups in Alexandria. There are a number of opportunities for citizens to be involved.

Durham explained that there are some Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) partnerships, as well as Adopt-A-Park, etc. with citizen groups. A key element is that the agreements are annual. In response to a question from Mr. Forbes, staff responded that the three signed MOU's as referenced in the memo are: 1.) Newly acquired 3550 Commonwealth Ave. - Old Vepco Site, 2.) Four Mile Run Park Farmers Market, and 3.) Passport have MOUs. Two others are pending: Jack Taylor- 433 Monroe Ave. and Fords Landing are near completion.

Chair- MOU's help ensure groups are undertaking projects that are compatible with public, not private use. A concern to be aware of is the potential privatization of public parks.

Forbes - asked Ms. Durham and Ms. Wedeles to report on how other jurisdictions operate friends groups, at a future meeting.

Durham- research for “friends groups” began when Henry Brooks was on the Commission. The focus was on how to help “friends group,” and how the City could benefit from these relationships.

Chair- An advantage to “friends groups” is that they can be a 501c3 status, which enables them to do fundraising (e.g. “Del Ray Artisans”). Another idea is for several “Friends Groups” to come together and form a joint 501c3 group, with sub-groups. Joint friends groups should operate, in some manner, under the same umbrella.

Action: The Chair asked that this item be put this back on agenda for November.

VI. Report from Commissioners (verbal updates):

A. Waterfront Committee -William Cromley.

Mr. Cromley said that attending the Waterfront meetings recently has been difficult; he is also on the steering committee for the new Jefferson Houston School. Mr. Cromley, will therefore resign from the Waterfront Committee; the Chair recommended that Gina Baum replace him. The Chair noted the importance of the P&RC’s role on this committee.

Motion: Richard Brune motioned to approve Ms. Baum as the new liaison to the City’s Waterfront Committee. Robert Moir seconded the motion. All were in favor. The Chair will write a letter supporting Ms. Baum’s appointment.

B. Youth Sport Committee - Jeffrey Murphy gave the report. Dana Wedeles, RPCA attended the last YSC meeting and gave a very informative presentation on the Needs Assessment, and answered questions. The YSC discussed the status of the Francis Hammond field lights request, scheduled to go before the BZA October 13. The YSC was disappointed that they will not be able to present comments at the hearing in support of the lights. Kagawa said in the typical process, BZA deliberations routinely occur among the staff. The Chair urged staff not to compromise on the Hammond field lights issue, as this might affect future fields.

Murphy- the YSC Field Sub-committee reported on the progress of the Miracle Field (league season and fundraising efforts); members are proud of the City’s fundraising initiative for a field at Lee Center, led by Bill Rivers, Chair, and YSC. Members received a staff report on status of field projects.

Ms. Wedeles, said that Saturday, 1:00 p.m. is the last game of the season.

Bob Moir said that Bill Rivers, will follow-up with the Harmon Killabrew foundation on a possible donation. This week he also submitted a proposal to the Crafitz Foundation, which is a major supporter of St. Colleta School.

C. Four Mile Run - Ripley Forbes. No report.

D. Freedman’s Cemetery - Bob Moir. Kagawa- project is out to bid with a contractor nearing selection. The construction schedule shows start up to be this winter, and will run for 18 months.

E. ACPS & Capital Improvements- Judy Guse-Noritake. ACPS is focusing on the next three years, beginning with redevelopment of Jefferson Houston school site. School enrollment continues to increase and available land is scarce.

- F. Jones Point Park Liaison Group- Judy Guse-Noritake - reported that the project is moving forward. See Staff Report Item IV-B.
 - G. Community Gardens Policy- Next Steps - Judy Noritake - Ms. Noritake spoke with Travest Hester, who installed cooperative gardens at G.W. School. She will convene a brief evening meeting to discuss this issue with a few key people. Target date is the week after Thanksgiving.
 - H. Ft. Ward- Robert Moir. The group is discussing procedures. They will be requesting funds in the CIP to complete various studies. T&ES recently corrected many of the water runoff problems. The Ft. Ward Committee is reviewing the overall Park Management Plan. Director Spengler said funds for the Management Plan are in contingency reserves for the 2012 budget.
- VII.** Agenda Items for November 2011 meeting and location – The next meeting is November 16, 7:00 p.m., Buddie Ford Nature Center. Agenda items include a presentation by Planning and Zoning on the Beauregard Corridor Plan, and review of CIP Citizens Requests. There is no meeting in December.
- VIII.** Public Time - At the close of the meeting, the Commission takes comments on any other topic from the public. None were received.
- IX.** Adjourned – 9:15 p.m.